Dead Count

STORY:
JUSTIN JONES

ART:
NIKKI BERNADEZ

1

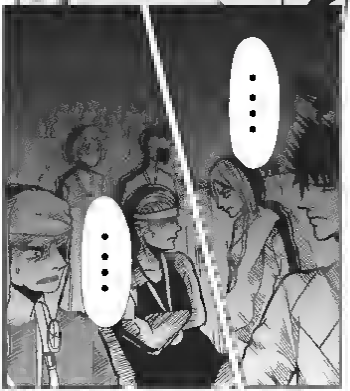
AFTER YEARS OF TRAINING, KAI AND NOAH HAVE FINALLY MADE IT TO THE DEAD COUNT QUALIFIERS.
AFTER SIGNING UP AND RECEIVING THEIR BADGES, EVERYONE HAS RECEIVED THE NEWS THAT THERE ARE VERY FEW TEAMS SCOUTING THIS YEAR!
AT THE VERY LEAST I HOPE THESE FIGURES PUT A SENSE OF URGENCY IN ALL OF YOU TO NOT LET A SINGLE CHANCE GO BY.
WHETHER A TEAM DROPS A MEMBER OR THEY LOSE ONE DURING A FIGHT, THAT IS THE ONLY TIME THEY'LL BE RECRUITING.
EVERYONE PLEASE SETTLE DOWN. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, NOT EVERY TEAM HAS AN OPENING EVERY YEAR.
IF YOU ARE APPROACHED BY A TEAM CAPTAIN AND GIVEN AN OFFER, IT IS COMPLETELY UP TO YOU WHETHER YOU ACCEPT IT OR NOT.
AN' TERMS ARE BETWEEN YOU AND THAT CAPTAIN.

CHAPTER 5: ONE BY ONE

GULP
NOW, ANY QUESTIONS?

IF THE SITUATION IS UNFAVORABLE FOR YOU, THERE IS NO SHAME IN GIVING UP. YOUR LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS
1
DEATHS ARE UNLIKELY HERE AT THE QUALIFIER LEVEL. BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

GOOD.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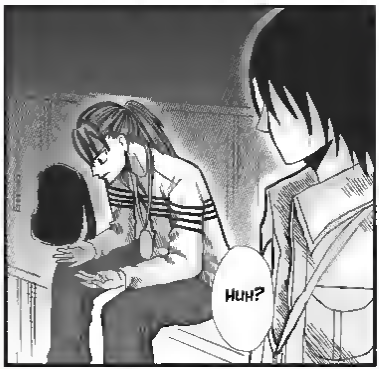
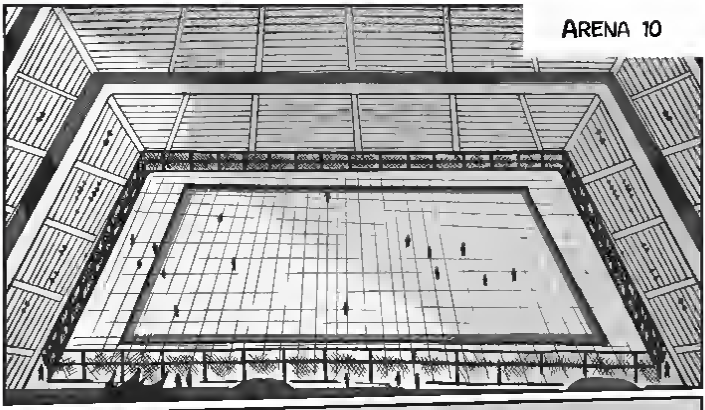
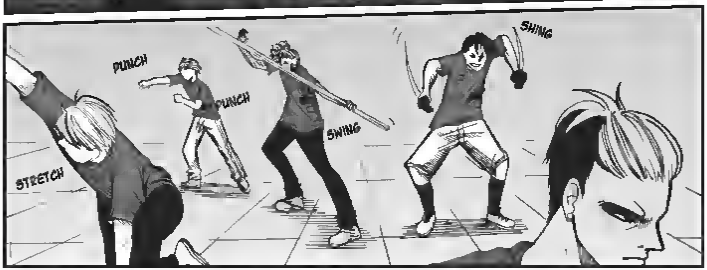

HUH?

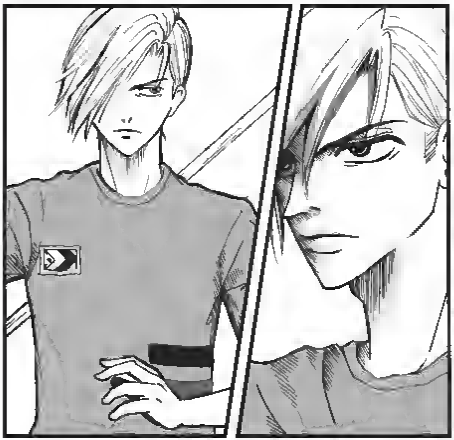
THIS IS ALMOST SCARY...

I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO GET STARTED!
SHAKE
SHAKE
WE'VE JUST BEEN TOLD THE ODDS ARE GREATLY AGAINST US, AND YET..
DAMN.

57
56
LET'S GO!




PUNCH
PUNCH
SWING
SWING
STRETCH

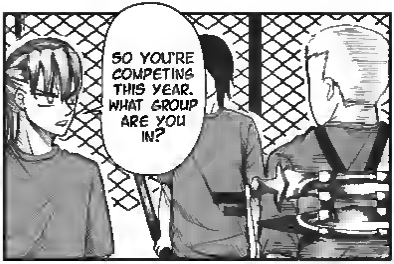


STARE

KYAAH!
KYAAH!
KYAAH!
KYAAH!
KYAAH!
KYAAH!
FALL
SHINE

FEELING PRETTY GOOD SO FAR. I JUST NEED TO NOT OVER PACE MYSELF AND I'LL BE FINE.
YES-I'LL BE FINE.
I HAVE TO BE.
SWING
SO..
HOW DO THEY FEEL?
SWING

IT WAS GREAT OF THEM TO MAKE THESE FOR US.
PUNCH
PRETTY GOOD. A LITTLE STIFF BUT I WILL WORK INTO THEM.
THE LAST TWO PEOPLE I EXPECTED TO SEE HERE.
SURPRISED
YEAH. THEY REALLY DO BELIEVE IN US.
THEN WE CAN'T LET THEM DOWN.
HOW AM I NOT SURPRISED ...


SO YOU'RE COMPETING THIS YEAR. WHAT GROUP ARE YOU IN?

KU KU KU
KU KU

THREE YEARS REALLY IS A LONG TIME..

SHOCK

CONNOR.
3 YEARS AND THAT IS HOW YOU GREET ME, SUZUKI?

DC Qualifiers
CONNOR
NEW AMERICA
10
I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.
AND DON'T THINK I'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOU, SICKY.
GRIN
PISSED
THINGS WON'T GO LIKE LAST TIME.
CONNOR.
NOAH!

CLANG
IT'S TIME TO SETTLE ALL OF OUR SCORES UP TO NOW!
GRIN
WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT THIS YEAR'S CROP BRINGS.
NO GUNS THAT REQUIRE PHYSICAL BULLETS, HIGH END EXPLOSIVES, OR BLADES OVER 6FT.
WITH THE MULTIPLE WEAPON RESTRICTIONS OF THIS FIRST ROUND IT DEFINITELY DOES MAKE IT A CHALLENGE.
CAPTAIN RIEGLER #1 OF TEAM RIEGLER(N.A)

AGAINST THOSE WHO STILL CAN
A GOOD CHANCE TO SEE WHO CAN ADAPT WHEN THEY CAN'T USE THEIR MOST PRIZED WEAPONS.
FIRST ROUND REFEREES IN THE QUALIFIERS ARE USUALLY VOLUNTEER FIGHTERS WHO HAVE THE FREE TIME
EVERYONE, PLEASE GET IN YOUR POSITION.
WE WILL NOW BEGIN THE QUALIFYING ROUND FOR GROUP 10! REMEMBER, THE FIGHT WILL ONLY LAST 30 MINUTES AND YOU MUST BE STANDING AND CONSCIOUS IN THE ARENA TO MOVE ON TO THE NEXT ROUND.

I HAVE TO PACE MYSELF OR I WON'T LAST.
FOCUS. FOCUS.
ONCE THE BUZZER STARTS YOU CAN BEGIN!
I'LL SHOW YOU THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR NATIONS, SUZUKI.

BEGIN!!
AAAAAAA
AAAAAAA
56
I'M COMING YOU BASTARD!

UN DUN
GAH!
HIT
YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO BE DISTRACTED IN THIS FIGHT. LOOK ONLY FORWARD...
59
AND YOU'LL GET BLIND-SIDED.

SHIT.
COUGH
COUGH
COUGH
UGH.
SWOOSH
YOU'RE MINE!

HE'S FAST!
BAM
...I SEE.

THOSE PADS. THEY AMPLIFY YOUR FORCE.
WIPE
AND WILL KNOWING THAT ACTUALLY HELP YOU?!!
RUSH

HA HA HA!!
HE'S QUICKER THAN HE LOOKS.
CLENCH
AND HE HAS A LOT OF POWER DESPITE THOSE PADS. BUT...
!!
DUCK
56
HAAAA
GLARE

5 DAYS AGO - PAPPY'S RANCH
SPLASH
KAI, COME HERE A SEC.
IT'S SO HOT!
WHAT'S UP OLD MAN?
WELL, I FIGURED AFTER KICKING YOU AROUND ALL THIS TIME, IT WAS TIME TO FINALLY FINISH THESE.

THEY'RE YOUR WEAPONS FOR THE DEAD COUNT
WOW WHAT ARE THESE?
THEY FEEL SO LIGHT...
WELL YEAH THAT IS NOT JUST METAL YOU ARE HOLDING THERE KID IT IS THIN LAYERS OF TERRGEL WRAPPED AROUND THE LIGHTEST METAL I COULD GET AHOLD OF
THE BAND AROUND THE KNUCKLES CONDUCTS THE ELEMENTAL EFFECT OF THE TERRAGEL
TERRAGEL?! WHERE'D YOU GET THE MONEY AND
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT KID I MANAGED TO TALK TO SOME OLD FRIENDS AND COLLECTED ENOUGH SCRAPS TO PUT THESE TOGETHER FOR YOU
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...
I...

BUT, I NEED TO WARN YOU, KAI. THESE WERE MADE FROM SCRAPS OF DIFFERENT TERRAGEL. WHILE I MANAGED TO SMELT THEM TOGETHER,
THERE'S A LOT OF DIFFERENT BASES MIXED UP IN THERE. SO, WHATEVER EFFECTS HAPPEN MAY HAPPEN RANDOMLY. I.. DON'T HAVE THE SKILL TO SEPARATE THEM..
THEN I'LL PUNCH HARD ENOUGH THAT IT DOESN'T EVEN MATTER!
BZZZZTT!
YOU'RE IN MY WAY!

END.